Universidad Latina de Panamá

Maestría en TESOL

**MÉTODOS DE INVESTIGACIÓN**

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| **Instructor** | Maria Dantas-Whitney, Ph.D. |
| **Email** | [dantasm@wou.edu](mailto:dantasm@wou.edu) |
| **Dates** | Saturday, April 8  Saturday, April 22  Saturday, April 29  Saturday, May 6 |
| **Class Schedule** | **8:00am-1:30pm:** Lectures; Group Discussions; Student Presentations  **1:30pm-4:00pm:** Group Work on Presentations; Research Proposal Assignments (to be submitted online) |

**Course Description and Objectives**

This course will provide you with basic knowledge about different research traditions, paradigms and methods. Specific emphasis will be given to classroom-based research. The course will also help you become a critical reader and interpreter of research writings in language learning and teaching. Course assignments will help you complete a proposal.

**Course Topics**

1. Key concepts in research
2. Research traditions and methods
3. Finding a focus and formulating a research question
4. Considering ethical issues, constraints and impediments
5. The role of theory
6. Writing a literature review
7. Observational techniques for data collection
8. Non-observational techniques for data collection
9. Processes of data analysis
10. Reporting results and drawing conclusions/implications from research

**Reading List**

***Main text:***

Brown, H. D., & Coombe, C. (Eds.). (2015). *The Cambridge guide to research in language teaching and learning*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

***Course information will also be taken from:***

Burns, A. (1999). *Collaborative action research for English language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D., & Bailey, K. M. (2009). *Exploring second language classroom research: A comprehensive guide*. Boston, MA: Heinle.

***Articles for critical analysis:***

Johnson, M., Acevedo, A., & Mercado, L. (2016). Vocabulary knowledge and vocabulary use in second language writing. *TESOL Journal, 7*(3), 700-715.

Kasula, A. (2015). Conducting action research in a practicum: A student teacher’s perspective. *The CATESOL Journal, 27*(2), 229-237.

Ochoa, C., Cabrera, P., Quiñónez, A., Castillo, L., & González, P. (2016). The effect of communicative activities on EFL learners’ motivation: A case of students in the Amazon region of Ecuador. *Colombian Applied Linguisttics Journal, 18*(2), 39-48.

Rincón, J. A., & Clavijo-Olarte, A. (2016). Fostering EFL learners’ literacies through local inquiry in a multimodal experience. *Colombian Applied Linguisttics Journal, 18*(2), 67-82.

Ulate, N. V. (2014). Notions of Non-native Teachers in Costa Rican Language Schools. *MEXTESOL Journal, 38*(1), 1-15.

Yoon, T. (2013). Are you digitized? Ways to provide motivation for ELLs using digital storytelling. *International Journal of Research Studies in Educational Technology, 2*(1), 25-34.

**Grading Policy:**

Your course grade will be based on the following:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignment** | **Total Possible Points** | **Percentage of Course Grade** |
| Attendance and Class Participation | 30 points | 30% |
| Group Presentation (Critical Analysis of Research Article) | 25 points | 25% |
| Research Proposal (assignments to be submitted online) |  |  |
| 1. Research topic, objectives and research questions | 5 points | 5% |
| 2. Literature review | 5 points | 5% |
| 3. Research site, and participants/informants in the study | 10 points | 10% |
| 4. Data collection methods | 10 points | 10% |
| 5. Data analysis methods | 5 points | 5% |
| 6. Potential obstacles and proposed solutions | 5 points | 5% |
| 7. References | 3 points | 3% |
| 8. Appendix(ces) | 2 points | 2% |
| **Total** | **100 points** | **100%** |

**Tentative Course Schedule**

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| **Date** | **Course Topics** | **Assignments** |
| April  8 | Course Introduction  Key concepts in research  Considerations for conducting teacher research  Critiquing research studies | Chapter 1: Teacher Research Engagement: Primary Motivators and Obstacles (Coombe & Sheetz)  Chapter 2: Critiquing the Research of Others (Dwyer & Baez)  **All Students: Critical Analysis of Kasula (2015)** |
| April 22 | The role of theory  Deciding upon a research methodology  Finding a focus and formulating a research question | Chapter 5: Framing and Defining your Research Project (Cheng)  Chapter 6: Deciding upon a Research Methodology (Brown)  Chapter 8: Qualitative Research (Richards)  **Group A: Critical Analysis of Ochoa et al. (2016)**  **Group B: Critical Analysis of Yoon (2013)**  **Group C: Critical Analysis of Johnson et al. (2016)**  **Online Assignment: Research Proposal: Research Topic (1) and Literature Review (2)—April 28** |
| April 29 | Observational and Non-observational techniques for data collection  Observation and rubrics  Notes and diaries  Audio and video recording  Photographs and documents  Interviews  Surveys and questionnaires | Chapter 26: Conducting Interviews (Kasper)  Chapter 27: Constructing Questionnaires (Coombe & Davidson)  Chapter 30: Designing and Using Rubrics (Davis)  Chapter 31: Conducting Diary Studies (Bailey)  **Group D: Critical Analysis of Rincon & Clavijo-Olarte (2016)**  **Group E: Critical Analysis of Ulate (2014)**  **Online Assignment: Research Proposal: Research Site & Participants (3), Data Collection Methods (4) – May 5** |
| May  6 | Data analysis processes and techniques  Validity & trustworthiness  Reporting results and drawing conclusions/implications from research | **Individual Presentations of Research Proposals**  **Online Assignment: Research Proposal: Data Analysis Methods (5), Potential obstacles & proposed solutions (6), References (7) and Appendices (8) – May 9 (new due date)** |

**Course Projects**

**Guidelines for Presentation of Critical Analysis of Research Article:**

The overall aim of this critical analysis is to provide an opportunity for you to interact in-depth with a particular area of language learning and/or teaching by critically reading a research article and producing a **succinct**, **coherent** and **accurate** summary of the content of that article, together with your own **critical** analysis of the article. Remember, good critical summaries cannot be merely descriptive, and require critical analysis and critical thinking on the part of the student.

Your critical analysis should address the following issues:

1. What is the research topic? Why is this topic of interest to theorists and practitioners in language learning and/or teaching? What are the possible theoretical and/or practical contributions and implications?  
   What do we know about this topic from previous research? What does the author of the study hope to add to what we already know?  
   What were the research questions? Were these questions too general? Were they specific enough to answer?
2. What was the research approach chosen (e.g., qualitative or quantitative)? What type of research design was used (e.g., survey, ethnographic, experimental, etc., or a combination of several methods). Who were the participants in the research? How were they selected and on what principles/rationales?
3. How was data collected and analyzed? Were the methods of data collection appropriate (e.g., got the right kind of data required to answer the research questions)? What other kinds of data collection methods should have been used? Were the data analyzed systematically and appropriately to answer the research questions?
4. What were the findings?   
   What conclusions does the author draw? Were the conclusions drawn based on the findings? Did the author make some conclusions which are merely based on his guesses? Did the recommendations and implications follow logically from the findings?
5. What suggestions does the author make for future research? Were they justifiable?  
   What questions about the study would you like to ask the author? What critical observations would you make? Keep in mind that ‘critical’ does not mean ‘negative’—rather, it refers to a careful evaluation of the article intended to explore, for example, whether the claims made by the author are supported by the data, and whether the research questions can be answered by the kinds of the data collected.

**Research Proposal Guidelines**

Please follow the format below for your research proposal:

**Please send your assignments via email to dantasm@wou.edu**

1. **Research topic, objectives and research questions (approx. 1 page)**What do you want to study? Why is it worth studying? Does the proposed study have theoretical and/or practical significance? (e.g., Any contribution to knowledge/theory and/or contribution to practice/solutions to practical problems?). Include your research questions.
2. **Literature review (approx. half to 1 page)**   
   You won’t have time to do a full review of the literature for this proposal. For the research proposal, please discuss one or two previous key studies on your topic as an outline of the research area. Give a short overview of the research questions, methods, and findings of the previous studies. Remember to state how your study is going to be different from the previous studies and what kinds of new findings, insights and contribution (can be theoretical, practical or both) it is expected to give.
3. **Research site, and participants/informants in the study (approx. 1 page)**Where will you conduct your study? Who or what will you study in order to collect data? Identify your participants/informants and how you will reach them. Also discuss the criteria and rationale for selecting them for your study.
4. **Data collection methods (approx. half page)**What kinds of data will you collect to answer your research question(s)? What different methods will you use to collect the different kinds of data for your study? Also describe how you are going to pilot and refine the data collection instruments (e.g., questionnaires, interview questions, language tests, etc.).
5. **Data analysis methods (approx. half page)**

Indicate the kind(s) of analysis you plan to conduct. Spell out the purpose and logic of each kind of analysis. Also outline the kinds or range of results that are likely to be obtained.

1. **Potential** **obstacles and proposed solutions (approx. half page)**

Mention potential obstacles and problems and discuss how these might be handled. Discuss any special equipment, access, or permission required and how these will be obtained.

1. **References**   
   Include a list of all sources cited in the text. Pick a standard style sheet (such as APA or MLA) and use it consistently throughout.
2. **Appendix(ces)**  
   Include any questionnaires, interview questions, definitions of coding categories, or pre-tests, post-tests, etc., here. If you haven’t developed these yet, include any models or samples that you will use.